

TRAVEL CONSUMER DAILY

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SAFETY FOCUS BACK ON INDONS

Japan's holiday gaze on China

THE land Down Under has, quite simply, gone out of fashion. The Japanese tourists who used to visit Australia in their hundreds of thousands are heading for China.

While that scenario is simplistic, the raw data for the northern summer holidays, starting this week, show how stark are the changes in habits for the Japanese, who have dropped Australia like a hot potato.

Japan Airlines on Friday released its projected figures for international and domestic passenger traffic for the Japanese summer vacation period stretching this year

from August 7 to August 16.

The forecast for international passenger traffic on JAL Group flights during the 10-day period is 338,453, down by 3.3% on the same period last year. The number of passengers forecast to depart Japan for China, Guam, Taiwan and Europe however, are expected to be an improvement of 35.6%, 5.1%, 2.0% and 0.9% respectively when compared to the same period last year.

At the same time, the number of Japanese heading for "Oceania" (read: Australia and New Zealand) compared with the same time last year is down a whopping 31.8%.

Reductions in scheduled flight frequency on routes serving China, South Korea, South East Asia, Taiwan and the United States, as well as the switch to smaller-sized aircraft on routes serving Australia, China and South East Asia from the beginning of FY2009, the year ending March 31, 2010, contributed to a drop in the number of available seats on the group's international network by 16%, JAL says.

The overall load factor on international routes is estimated to be 84.7%, 11.1 percentage points up from

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INDONESIA's air safety record is again under the spotlight following a crash involving the Government-owned Merpati Airlines, which has left 16 people feared dead in the remote eastern Papua province.

Rain yesterday hampered the search for the Twin Otter plane that went missing on a Sunday morning flight from the provincial capital Jayapura and the village of Oksibil in the Papuan mountains.

Jayapura Air Base commander Suwandi Miharja, who is coordinating the search, said rescuers were focusing their search on the border between Kerom and Pegunungan Bintang districts.

"It's a mountainous, jungly region," he said. "They're flying beneath the clouds. The weather is unfriendly... foggy and rainy."

Thirteen passengers and three crew, all Indonesian, were on board the Merpati Nusantara Twin Otter when it disappeared.

Merpati, an independent Government-owned airline, integrated into the national carrier Garuda in the 1990s, then cut loose again, but still under Government ownership, remains on the list of Indonesian carriers banned by the European Union, even though Garuda now has EU approval.

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JAL Group International Forecast JAL/JAZ/JEX Routes	Available Seat % Change on 2008 (%)	Passenger Total	Aug 7 - Aug 16, 2009	
			% Pax Change on 2008 (%)	Seat load factor (%)
Hawaii	- 2.4	46,888	- 6.7	92.1
Transpacific	- 14.4	33,083	- 12.9	98.0
Europe	- 10.8	38,125	+ 0.9	97.6
S.E. Asia	- 14.7	78,198	- 6.6	76.8
Oceania	- 32.3	6,364	- 31.8	70.2
Guam	- 1.0	16,230	+ 5.1	89.2
South Korea	- 30.8	30,215	- 27.7	90.5
China	- 17.5	56,661	+ 35.6	72.5
Taiwan	- 23.8	32,689	+ 2.0	92.5
TOTAL	-16.0%	338,453	-3.3%	84.7%

FOCUS BACK ON INDON SAFETY

FROM PAGE 1

crash record was notorious in the 1990s with no fewer than 16 crashes that killed at least 132 people, figures from the Air Safety Foundation show.

Up until early this decade, Merpati operated a twice-weekly Boeing 737 service from Kupang in west Timor, to Darwin in Australia's Northern Territory.

In the current decade, there has been a dramatic improvement in Merpati's safety performance. If the 16 missing in the latest crash are confirmed dead, it will have been Merpati's worst crash in more than 16 years.

Three crew died in Merpati's most recent fatal crash in 2001, but no passengers have died in an accident since 1997.

However, while the Indonesian airline industry in general now appears to be giving safety a high priority, with the Government withdrawing the operating licences of recidivists, the Indonesian military and police continue to be involved in terrible loss of life.

On May 20 this year, up to 99 people died when an Indonesian Air Force C130 Hercules crashed on approach to Madiun-Iswahyudi Airport in eastern Java.

On April 6 this year, 24 soldiers died when an air force Fokker F27 crashed at Bandung airport in west Java after a parachuting exercise.

Another air force crash in west Java on June 26 last year killed 18 people.

Just too big: Thai rolls back A380s

THAI Airways International is the latest airline to balk at the idea of having to lift more than 500 people at once in the new Airbus A380 super-jumbo (pictured in Thai livery) when international travel markets are severely depressed.

Thai last week sealed an agreement with the European plane maker Airbus to delay the delivery of its six A380 superjumbos by about two years.

THAI acting president Narongsak Sangapong and Airbus executive vice-president Kiran Rao confirmed the agreement that avoided legal complications from the \$US1.8-billion contract default, the Bangkok Post reported. The national carrier earlier had considered cancelling the order first placed 2004 or switching to the smaller A350-1000 jets that Airbus is now developing.

"We fully understand the economic climate, current market situation, their (THAI) concerns and requirements, and we found an appropriate solution and came to an agreement (to delay the delivery)," Airbus's Dr Rao told the Bangkok Post.

THAI is now scheduled to receive its first A380 in the third quarter of 2012, instead of late 2010 as scheduled earlier. Subsequent deliveries would take place in October and December 2012, January, September and October 2013, according to THAI insiders.

Thai plans to use the A380s on European routes from its Bangkok hub to Frankfurt, London and Paris, with the possibility of operating shorter high-volume services to Sydney, Tokyo and Shanghai, the airline's executive chairman Wallop Bhukkanasut said.

Though the A380 can seat 525 passengers in a typical three-class layout, THAI's aircraft would have 510 seats in three classes.

Total firm orders for the A380s currently stand at 200 aircraft from 16 customers. s.



Indian airlines call off strike plan

PRIVATE Indian airlines have called off a plan to "strike" on 18 August to pressure the Indian government to lower airport charges and fuel taxes.

The Federation of Indian Airlines, representing the private carriers, said it had decided to call off the strike "in view of the agitated public sentiment and potential inconvenience to thousands of passengers on the one hand, and the government's willingness to enter into dialogue on the other". The FIA said it hoped "constructive dialogue with government will lead to a redressal of the problems faced by the aviation industry".

Last Friday, the airlines, led by Kingfisher Airlines and Jet Airways said that they would suspend their operations for a day if the Government did not agree to bring down the tax on jet fuel and reduce airport charges.

Over the weekend, however, the coalition effectively fell apart when MDLR Airlines, Paramount Airways, SpiceJet and Indigo all said they would operate on 18 August. State-owned Air India, which is a member of the association, said that it would not participate. That left only Jet and Kingfisher, which decided to call off their action.

Indian civil aviation minister Praful Patel said while understood the airline industry's difficulties, but told

local media: "The Government does not support any move that will inconvenience the travelling public of the country. We advise the airlines to engage in a dialogue with the Government."

Bali, E Timor may get together

THE Chairman of the Bali Tourism Board (BTB), Ngurah Wijaya, has told the National News Agency Antara that he welcomes moves to develop tourism cooperation between Bali and the East Timor capital of Dili, according to the Bali Update weekly newsletter.

Wijaya told Indonesia's Antara news agency: "This is very interesting. We can exchange our tourism destinations by presenting them in joint destination packages. Dili has long been known in Bali as a key destination and the many international workers assigned in Dili spend their holidays in Bali."

Wijaya said that the number of international workers traveling from Dili to Bali has decreased in recent years, following East Timor's independence from Indonesia and the gradually diminishing role of international agencies there.

Wijaya said there should be well-planned approach to developing Bali-Dili tourism. One means of supporting Dili tourism, he said was through the sharing of skills and knowledge from Bali's advanced tourism labor base.

The idea of enhancing tourism exchanges between Denpasar and Dili was also recently raised between Indonesia and East Timor when the East Timor Ambassador to Jakarta, Manuel Cerrano, said the idea of tourism cooperation between Bali and Dili was "interesting and promising".

Bali and Dili are linked by a daily Merpati service.

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